

CEBERUS.

I STOOD within Death's gate,
And blew the horn of Hell:
Mad laughters echoing against Fate,
Harsh groans less terrible,
Howled from beneath the vault; in night the avenging
thunders swell.

The guardian stood aloof,
A monster multiform.
His armour was of triple proof,
His voice out-shrilled the storm.
Behind him all the Furies whirl and all the Harpies
swarm.

The first face spake and said:
"Welcome, O King, art thou!
Await thy throne a thousand dead;
A crown awaits thy brow,
A seven-sting scorpion; for thy rod thou hast a bauble
now."

The next face spake and said:
"Welcome, O Priest, to me!

Red blood shall dye thee robes of red,
Hell's cries thy litany!
Thy mitre sits, divided strength, to end thy church
and thee!"

The third face spake and said :
"Welcome, O Man, to Death!
Thy little span of life is sped,
Sighed out thy little breath.
The worm that never dies is thine; the fire that
lingereth!"

"Three voices has thy frame,
Their music is but one.
Fool-demon, slave of night and shame,
That canst not see the sun!
I am the Lord thy God: make thou homage and
orison!"

The wild heads sank in fear :
Then, troubled, to those eyes
Remembrance crept of many a year,
Barred gates of Paradise.
Again the Voice rolled in the deep, mingled with
murmuring sighs :

"I mind me of the day
One came from Death to me ;
His soul was weary of the day,
His look was melancholy ;
He bade me open in the Name that binds Eternity.

“Yet though he passed within
And plunged within the deep,
The seven palaces of sin,
And slept the lonely sleep,
Yet came He out alone: but then I thought I heard
Them weep.

“He passed alone, above,
Out of the Gates of Night;
Angels of Purity and Love
Drew to my sound and sight.
I heard Them cry that even there He fixed the eternal
Light.

“I think beneath these groans,
And laughters madness-born,
Tears fell that might dissolve the stones
That grind the accurséd corn.
Beneath the deep, beneath the deep, may dwell the
star of morn!

“Therefore, O God, I pray
Redemption for the folk
That dread the scourging light of day,
That bear the midnight yoke.
The Chaos was no less than this—and there the light
awoke.”

“O Dog of Evil, yea!
Thou hast in wisdom said.

The glory of the living day
Shall shine among the dead.
Thy faith shall have a holier task, thy Strength a
goodlier stead.”

Then I withdrew the light
Of mine own Godhead up,
As stars that close with broken night
Their adamantine cup.
I sought the solar airs: my soul on its own tears
might sup.

For in the vast profound
Still burns the rescuing sign;
Beyond all sight and sense and sound
The symbol flames divine.
For He shall make all life, all death, His solitary
shrine.